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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 17 October 2017, 10.20 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Moustafa
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Lacroix.

Mr. Lacroix (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to provide the Security Council with an update on the Secretary-General's 30-day report and on the situation in South Sudan. I will begin by sharing some information on the deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF), to complement the information that has already been provided to the Security Council.

(*spoke in English*)

The deployment of the Regional Protection Force is under way. We expect the main body of the Rwandan infantry battalion to complete its deployment in November. The Ethiopian battalion advance party has started arriving in Juba and its deployment is expected to be completed by 20 October. The main body's road move from Addis Ababa to Juba will commence in the latter part of October, subject to clearances by the Kenyan and Ugandan Governments. Despite various bureaucratic delays, we continue to engage with the Government on a regular basis to expedite that deployment. We strongly believe that enhanced cooperation with the Government on the issue remains critical for the RPF to implement its mandate.

The security situation in the country remains a cause for serious concern. During the past month, the security situation in the greater Upper Nile has deteriorated, with reports of clashes in northern Jonglei and the eastern Upper Nile between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the pro-Machar forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition (SPLM-IO). On 1 October, the SPLM-IO reportedly attacked Waat in Jonglei to seize control of the town. Since that attack, there have been reports of intense fighting, which has led to heavy casualties on both sides. Meanwhile, fighting continues for the control of Pagak. The continued presence of opposition forces in Nhialdu and other locations in Unity state is likely to invite SPLA counteroperations, thereby leading to more internally displaced persons being displaced towards the Bentiu protection of civilians site.

The security situation in the Equatorias also remained precarious. In Western Equatoria, there was an increase in incidents against non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Some NGO staff members travelling between Tambura and Yambio were robbed by armed assailants along the road. The compound of an international NGO in Yeri, approximately 50 kilometres north-east of Mvolo, was broken into by armed perpetrators on 26 September. Furthermore, Mudubai village, approximately 50 kilometres north-east of Maridi town, was also attacked by armed assailants on 28 September. Four civilians were reportedly abducted and tukuls were burned down. In southern Central Equatoria, SPLA soldiers allegedly killed two civilians in Abuwa Boma, near Ombaci town.

All of those incidents should be cause for grave concern, given the imminent start of the dry season, which traditionally leads to increased levels of violence with improved mobility across the country. The human rights situation in the country remains extremely concerning. Extrajudicial killings of civilians, arbitrary arrests and detentions, the repression of free speech with impunity, and the harassment of political opponents continued throughout the reporting period.

As submitted to the Security Council, within the tense security environment, the Government's security institutions continue to restrict freedom of movement for the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Similarly, opposition forces have also restricted access in areas under their control. I would therefore strongly urge the Security Council to pronounce itself, highlighting that the Government's continued violations of the status of forces agreement and restrictions imposed by opposition forces are both causes for grave concern.

Overall, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, with continued insecurity and an

increasingly challenging operating environment. Despite a highly effective humanitarian operation that has reached millions with life-saving assistance, humanitarian indicators are likely to deteriorate further unless there is a reduction in conflict and improved access.

More than 2 million people have fled since the start of the conflict in 2013. More than 1 million are in Uganda, with thousands fleeing in recent months from the counties of Yei, Kajo Keji, Kapoeta North, Mundri West, Morobo and Maridi. Others have fled to Ethiopia and the Sudan, most recently following clashes in Upper Nile. In addition, another 1.9 million people are displaced within the country. While a significant portion of the population is already displaced, either inside or outside the country, further displacement can be expected and any significant return of refugees or internally displaced persons remains unlikely. With the return of the dry season towards the end of the year, population movements — particularly refugee outflows — are likely to reaccelerate.

The number of humanitarian access incidents has grown in recent months. In August, for example, over 100 incidents were recorded and more than half of them involved violence against personnel or assets. Two aid workers were killed in August and one in September, bringing the total number killed this year alone to 18. Aid workers have been detained on several occasions, and humanitarian supplies have been regularly looted from vehicles or compounds. Bureaucratic impediments imposed by the Government have also become more constraining, including the imposition of higher taxes and fees that particularly impact NGOs.

In our view, Juba remains focused on the national dialogue process as a vehicle to move the process towards elections, with an overall aim to end the transition period. The National Dialogue Steering Committee has reached out to some opposition parties, as well as to civil society organizations. However, the credibility of the process remains in question, owing to significant opposition groups being so far unwilling to join, against the backdrop of the concurrent SPLA military operations.

With regard to the revitalization forum announced by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Government has only given a conditional response. IGAD has begun consultations and held meetings with opposition figures, including Riek Machar in South Africa, who have all declared cautious support for the process. An IGAD Foreign Ministers meeting was also held with President Kiir and his Cabinet on 13 October, during which the latter reportedly committed to supporting the revitalization forum, while requesting a series of clarifications on its objectives that IGAD agreed to address in writing. I would like to emphasize the criticality of this initiative. I urge Council members to use their leverage on all parties and encourage them to engage in this process meaningfully and without any preconditions.

With regard to the political process itself, I would like to re-emphasize a few principles. The conflict in South Sudan is a direct outcome of a prolonged disproportionate access to power and wealth in the country. All future dispensations, therefore, must rest on the principle of inclusivity that leads to equitable power- and wealth-sharing. Similarly, South Sudan has been held hostage to personality politics and conflicts as far back as we can remember. All processes and international support must strive to build institutions so that politics shifts from ownership by individuals to those institutions that must be accountable to the people of South Sudan.

I would like to reiterate that the conflict in South Sudan is a man-made conflict for which the leaders of South Sudan bear a direct responsibility. The dire economic situation and continued conflict in the country have come together to inflict a very heavy price on the South Sudanese population. They deserve better. The same leaders who are responsible for the conflict can also bring the country back from the impending abyss. All that is needed is genuine political will to halt military operations, peacefully negotiate and make the compromises that are necessary to achieve sustainable peace in the country. As I mentioned earlier, the IGAD revitalization forum will provide an ideal opportunity for that. I would also urge the Security Council to pronounce itself in that regard. It is critical that the leaders of South Sudan hear the international community's unified demand for what is expected of them.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Lacroix for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I thank the Under-Secretary-General for

Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his briefing, which gives us a comprehensive overview of the most recent events in South Sudan.

I would like to underscore a few points that I believe are important.

First, we continue to support the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and commend its work. It seeks tirelessly to contribute to fostering dialogue at the political level, which is the only way to rekindle the peace process in South Sudan and to pave the way for democratic elections to be held at the end of the transition period. It is essential that all parties involved in the quest for a solution to the conflict, in particular the United Nations and the African Union, support the IGAD initiative on the high-level revitalization forum and speak with one voice in sending a clear and unequivocal message to the parties to the conflict on the importance of seizing this opportunity to make progress in resolving the conflict.

As we have said in the past, regardless of how united the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD may be in terms of the expectations they pin on the high-level revitalization forum, this initiative will not amount to anything if the parties to the conflict do not demonstrate an unwavering commitment to making headway in seeking a solution to the crisis. We therefore reiterate our appeal to all parties to immediately stop their armed confrontations, commit to a ceasefire and participate in good faith in the forum.

We are saddened to learn from the 30-day report of the Secretary-General that restrictions of all sorts are again being imposed on the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan by the Government, and that only 20 per cent of the Regional Protection Force, which was approved by the Council more than a year ago, is currently deployed. Throughout the past year, we have continued to insist that no State has the right to block or interfere in the standard operations of a mission established by the Security Council. In looking at the Secretary-General's report, in just 30 days we have 17 recorded cases of lack of compliance or refusal by the Government of South Sudan to fulfil the obligations established in the status-of-forces agreement. There have been all types of repeated obstructions of the status of forces agreement, including requests for documents and special permits, and that is only the tip of the iceberg. We have also heard reports of Government security forces aiming their weapons at United Nations staff.

All of this is absolutely unacceptable, and there are only two possible reasons for it. It is the result either of a clear policy of hostility or, barring that, of the Government's complete inability to maintain proper control over its own armed forces. Either of those excuses is completely unacceptable and the Security Council must speak to this. Status-of-forces agreements are not merely United Nations documents, but, as we have said thousands of times, they are also a safeguard to protect the forces provided by the troop- and police-contributing countries to peacekeeping operations. These status-of-forces agreements are the guarantees offered to all peacekeepers they are deployed in the field. Therefore, we cannot allow violations of the status-of-forces agreement.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We thank Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, for his briefing to the Council.

Undoubtedly, we all agree that the situation in South Sudan continues to be of serious concern. Whatever Under-Secretary-General Lacroix has said in this regard is valid. The conflict continues unabated. The economic and financial problems the country is facing are indescribably huge. It is not clear how they can be managed without the support of the international community. This needs to be looked at very seriously. It is not unrelated to the effort being made to achieve peace in the country.

The humanitarian situation continues to worsen, and its severity is incalculable. That is what makes the cessation of all hostilities and violence in the country, as well as ensuring safe and unhindered access for humanitarian actors, absolutely critical and urgent. The lack of meaningful progress in the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan is further exacerbating the already dire situation. The peace Agreement is the only viable way forward to bring an end to the conflict and restore peace and stability in South Sudan.

The success of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) high-level revitalization forum is becoming all the more crucial. The high-level forum is key to restoring the permanent ceasefire and the full implementation of the peace agreement. Indeed, we are moderately pleased to see that substantive progress has been made towards the convening of the

high-level forum. The IGAD Council of Ministers undertook successful consultations with the parties to the peace agreement and estranged groups as part of the pre-forum consultations in preparation for the high-level revitalization forum.

One measure of the success of these visits by the IGAD Council of Ministers is that all the parties consulted have expressed their support for the revitalization forum and the cessation of hostilities. It must be underlined that when we say that all parties were consulted, we mean literally all parties without exception, including the former First Vice-President. IGAD will be holding a summit in the near future — we hope in December — to take stock of the outcome of the series of consultations and to provide directions on the launch of the actual high-level revitalization forum.

One thing that should be stressed in that regard is that the high-level revitalization forum should in no way be understood as a new negotiating platform. It should rather be seen as an initiative that provides an opportunity for the parties to the peace agreement and estranged groups to expedite, in a realistic and genuine manner, the implementation of the peace agreement to restore a permanent ceasefire and to develop a revised and realistic timeline and implementation schedule towards a democratic election at the end of the transition period.

Now, IGAD does not have a magic wand to create miracles in South Sudan. Like all complex peace processes, this one also exhibits all the complexities that are rooted in a lack of trust, not only among parties, but also between parties on the one hand and mediators on the other. Memories of disappointments and betrayals in the past aggravate the absence of mutual trust. The absence of inclusivity, as Under-Secretary-General Lacroix mentioned, is the other element. Under these circumstances, even the smallest progress in the process of this meeting need not be belittled.

It is in part for that reason that the efforts of IGAD to revitalize the peace agreement, which has gained encouraging momentum, needs to be sustained. The support of the international community, in particular that of the Security Council, is absolutely critical for ensuring the effectiveness of the revitalization agenda. Indeed, we cannot overemphasize the importance of the full support of the Council for the success of the regional efforts being exerted to ensure the full implementation of the peace agreement. At the end of the day, it is only through a carefully worked out political strategy that the multifaceted problems of South Sudan can be addressed. Only then can sustainable peace be achieved. Frankly, at present, the high-level revitalization forum is the only show in town, and the IGAD countries are all united behind that agenda.

All talk about the destructive impact of parallel initiatives should be thrown out the window. The consultations with the parties that were mentioned earlier were conducted in the presence of all the Ministers or their representatives. The Council has no reason to not fully support that effort, without caveats. We believe that the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and IGAD should be commended for maintaining the unity of purpose among the three organizations in the search for lasting peace, security and stability in South Sudan. The high-level revitalization forum would not have progressed in the way it has without those three organizations working in close consultation and coordination. We encourage the United Nations, the AU and IGAD to redouble their efforts and further strengthen that positive trend.

We are encouraged to learn that all the parties have expressed their commitment to the high-level revitalization forum and the cessation of hostilities. That is particularly important because no matter what we — both in the region and in the rest of the international community — can do, the success of the revitalization process, as well as addressing the enormous challenges that South Sudan is facing, will depend greatly upon the willingness of all the parties, as the representative of Uruguay said. We still remain hopeful that all the parties will seize the opportunity provided and work towards achieving the purposes of the revitalization agenda.

Finally, we recognize that the deployment of vanguard units of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) continues according to the revised timelines. In that regard, we endorse what Under-Secretary-General Lacroix said on the matter. Although serious problems linger and need to be addressed, we are particularly encouraged to see improved cooperation from the Government with regard to the deployment of the RPF. The troop-contributing countries to the RPF, including Ethiopia, remain committed to its deployment, as well as to its rationale of the Force itself.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia would like to thank

Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing today on the situation in South Sudan.

Once again, we lament and express our concern about the deterioration of the situation in the country. There has been so significant improvement in the humanitarian, security and economic crisis, while the people of South Sudan are far from achieving the peace and stability that they have been unjustly denied for so long. As a result, every day thousands of South Sudanese are leaving their homes, thereby giving rise to new internal displacements that aggravate the crisis. It is not possible to speak of real progress if the clashes between the parties do not cease. Several months ago, the Security Council called for full compliance with the ceasefire declared by the Government However, that call has been ignored. We emphasize that it will not be possible to establish the necessary conditions for dialogue if the fighting continues The lack of political will and leadership remains very evident.

Bolivia underscores that a sustainable solution to the conflict in South Sudan must be achieved through a credible political process and inclusive dialogue that will lead to compliance with the 2015 agreement. In that regard, the efforts being made by regional organizations are fundamental to achieving that end — all that is needed is complementarity among those initiatives.

For my delegation, support for the leadership of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is indisputable. The high-level revitalization forum is the only concrete initiative that exists, and we therefore appreciate the efforts exerted by IGAD in that regard. We also welcome the support of the African Union, as expressed in the most recent communiqué of the African Union Peace and Security Council, which serves to give new impetus to and re-establish the political process in South Sudan through the high-level revitalization forum. We encourage all the parties to engage and participate constructively. It is a unique opportunity to establish sustainable peace through restoring a permanent ceasefire, implementing the peace agreement and developing a realistic timetable for a democratic election at the end of the transition period.

Another important point is the call to put forward a memorandum of understanding on the establishment of the Hybrid Court. We believe that justice and accountability would help to bring about the reconciliation and healing processes, which are key to establishing lasting peace. We emphasize that it is essential that the process of establishing the Hybrid Court be African-led. We emphasize the Government's willingness to carry out the establishment of the Hybrid Court.

With regard to the deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF), we welcome the good offices of the Special Representative. It is essential to work in harmony and cooperation with the Government in order to allow the RPF to operate smoothly. Its deployment will enable the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to extend its presence to other areas of conflict, protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance.

In conclusion, we wish to express our appreciation to the United Nations country team and to UNMISS for the work that they carry out in South Sudan. We commend the approach they have been taking to the protection of civilians.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of your duties as President of the Security Council for month of October. I assure you of my delegation's support and cooperation.

As has already been reported by the representative of Ethiopia, this past weekend the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) visited Juba, where, from all accounts, they held successful consultation meetings with various stakeholders to the peace agreement in South Sudan.

I would like to reiterate that my delegation acknowledges the support and time that the Council puts into the search for sustainable peace and security in my country, as well as the crucial roles of the African Union and IGAD, respectively.

By and large, the Transitional Government of National Unity again recommitted itself to the high-level revitalization forum during the visit of the IGAD Ministers for Foreign Affairs, and the Transitional Government of National Unity is determined to carry out the full implementation of the peace agreement. Therefore, it is the same approach with which they accepted the revitalization process to be undertaken, as proposed by IGAD. However, the Transitional Government of National Unity proposed, and we

understand that IGAD accepted, that the Transitional Government of National Unity would participate in the forum as one entity.

One of the objectives of the high-level revitalization forum is to silence the guns and accommodate any estranged groups that might be holding out from the peace agreement. We are happy to report that the Transitional Government of National Unity has declared itself open to being involved in the implementation of the peace agreement among the groups that are expected to denounce violence.

The Transitional Government of National Unity proposes that the basis for the revitalization forum be the status of the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The process ought to be preceded by update reports from the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and the Transitional Government of National Unity on the status of its implementation, in order for the IGAD leadership and the participants in the high-level revitalization forum to appreciate the provisions of the agreements that have been implemented, those in the process of implementation and the ones that have not been implemented and why.

Establishing peace and security in the country is paramount to unity among the South Sudanese. That is why the Transitional Government of National Unity continues to welcome the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and its equipment. That is also the main reason that the Transitional Government of National Unity looks forward to the convening of the high-level revitalization forum.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.